



www.uml.edu/csp

The C.C. Staff:

Elizabeth Looney

Michelle Holmberg

Khanh T. Dinh, PhD

**IN THIS
ISSUE:**

- **New Faculty:**
Jana Sladkova
- **Alum Corner**
- **Welcome to
New Students!**
- **New PGSO
Officers**
- **“Save the
Date” Events
to Remember**

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”
Audre Lorde



The Community Connection

The Official Newsletter of the Community Social Psychology Graduate Program
Department of Psychology
University of Massachusetts Lowell

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

FALL 2008

CSP Welcomes New Faculty Member: Jana Sladkova

By Michelle Holmberg

The Community Social Psychology Graduate Program is excited to have Dr. Jana Sladkova joining the Faculty in the Department of Psychology. Dr. Sladkova enhances the diversity of the department and brings with her an expertise in research with immigrant populations.

Dr. Sladkova cites the existing faculty as an impetus for accepting her job position at UMass Lowell. On a visit to the university she saw the Psychology Department as “a very good place to work in terms of colleagues, being challenged, being supported, and people doing lots of very interesting and meaningful research.” The opportunity to attend a graduate class and interact with current CSP students also influenced her decision. She was impressed with “the way students were interacting with me, and the types of questions they were asking...quite deep questions.”

Her own experiences serve as inspiration for her life’s work. When asked how immigration, a topic of particular interest became a focus of her work, she replies “probably because I am an immigrant myself; I came 17 years ago from Czech Republic.” Dr. Sladkova received her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Economics from the Prague School of Economics, and then also received her Masters in Applied Linguistics and Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). She spent many years teaching English to non-native speakers, both in the United States and South Korea. Eventually, she became the director of a program which not only taught immigrants English, but helped them earn their Graduate Equivalent Degree (GED).

Dr. Sladkova spent the last eleven years in New York City, where she received her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from City



Dr. Jana Sladkova

University of New York. Reflecting on her professional title, Dr. Sladkova says, “Even though I am a social psychologist I don’t really put a lot of emphasis on the fact that I’m a psychologist, because all of my work is very inter-disciplinary, so I like to think of myself as a social scientist.” She will use her training and experience to work with immigrant populations here in the Lowell area, and cites raids on undocumented workers as an area of particular concern. She says, “I can’t prevent it, but I would like to help the community.”

Her research will not only be locally based, but will take her out of the country. Dr. Sladkova will return to Honduras, a country in which she has done much research, and will study the children of migratory workers. Due to the poverty in Honduras, many adults leave their children behind while they work in the United States to send back financial support to their families. Dr. Sladkova explains, “I want to see what is happening to [the children] in terms of development, how they are dealing with the absence of their parents, and I want to do that in Honduras.” Dr. Sladkova hopes to develop a program that provides opportunities for UML students to collaborate both in her research and community work in Honduras.

The fall semester has been a busy one for Dr. Sladkova. Not only is she adjusting to a new city, a new university, and a new department, she is also expecting the birth of her first child. Dr. Sladkova is due to deliver in December, and is excited to work towards being “both a good mom and good professor, which is not always easy.” So, as she gets ready to welcome her child this winter, the CSP program is delighted to welcome Dr. Jana Sladkova to UMass Lowell. We are happy to have you!

ALUM CORNER: Interview With Judy Lethbridge

By Elizabeth Looney

Each semester, the CSP Graduate Program highlights an alumnae/i and asks them to share some of their insights and experiences. This semester’s Alum Spotlight is on Judy Lethbridge (formerly Swenson). Judy graduated from CSP in 2003 and has since been working with the Lowell Community Health Center in the Center for AIDS Related Intervention Networking Organization (CARINO) HIV Program. Here, she shares a bit about her experience with CSP and what she has been able to accomplish afterwards.

Judy’s time with CSP enabled her to pursue a variety of different interests, from green building to public health. After attending a conference in Boston on Sustainability, Judy was able to identify Green Building resources. Judy’s work with green building began as a seminar project, and eventually became her Master’s project work under Dr. Linda Silka.

Subsequently, Judy says, “Green building became a

passion.” After inheriting eight acres of land, Judy was able to build and sell five homes, all with solar photovoltaic cells installed on each roof. As Judy adds, “The houses were Energy Star rated either 5 or 5+, the best ratings for residential housing. So my theoretical project for the seminar class became part of my final project and continues to contribute to the environment by producing electricity for our houses and returning to the grid any additional electricity.”

The other area of interest Judy worked on before, during, and after her CSP degree is public health and HIV. Judy initially earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology, and has done much work around health promotion and disease prevention in this area. Judy began her current work with Lowell Community Health Center (LCHC) after her CSP Practicum at the Nashua Department of Public Health. Judy began her work at LCHC by working under a Center for Disease Control pilot project.

(continued on page 2)

Alum Corner (continued from page 1)



**Judy Lethbridge, CSP
Class of 2003**

She conducted a Routine HIV Testing Initiative which contributed to nation-wide recommendations for HIV testing, regardless of age. Currently, she coordinates the case management team that serves approximately 300 HIV+ individuals each year. "One insight gained from my degree," Judy says about her current work, "is that people most often know the solutions to their problems, and are the best people to tap into for solutions."

As for current students, Judy advises that all of us take an active role in getting a well-rounded education out of our time with the CSP program. Judy's varied and dynamic interests would certainly be a testament to the ways one can do this! "Use your practicum time with an agency or concern that you really have passion about," Judy says. "Use your project or thesis to develop something that really matters and results in a sustainable change – whether in ideas, process, or services. Make a difference." Judy is certainly a wonderful example of a CSP alum who has made a difference in our community!



Save the Date!

National Multicultural Conference (NMCS): January 15-16, 2009 in New Orleans. Theme of the 2009 NMCS is "Advancing Our Communities: The Role of Social Justice in Multicultural Psychology." Online registration: www.multiculturalsummit.org/registration.htm

The Center for Women and Work 11th Annual Forum "Gathering at the Well": Thursday, April 2, 2009. This year's theme is Working Against Gender-Based Violence: Coordinating Community Change. Community psychologist and rape researcher Rebecca Campbell will present her award-winning work on Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Programs.

Society for Community Research and Action 12th Biennial Conference: June 18-21, 2009; Montclair State University, NJ; www.scr.a27.org



Welcome to the New CSP Students

By Michelle Holmberg

With a new academic year comes a new set of graduate students for the Community Social Psychology Program. The new members represent many different countries, varying ethnic backgrounds, ages, and gender. Johannes Thru is one student who has traveled a distance to be here. Coming from Germany, Johannes explains that the CSP program attracted him because "I always wanted to study in a program that matched my own ideals and take classes facilitated by teachers that...are conscious of the political implications of society on science and research, because I think that is something that should not be ignored." Johannes is not sure where the future will lead him, but for now he is focusing on making new friends, meeting lots of interesting people, and trying to "get a feeling for what it means to be a part of North American society."



Front L-R: Ashley N., Amy S., Danielle G., Nisha N., Wah K.
Back L-R: Lingtao Y., Macklin X., Johannes T., Rhea M., Lindsey T., Jim L.

Penny Bruce has some different reasons for her choice in graduate programs. "The real reason I wanted my Masters degree is so that I can teach holistic health in a community college," she says, adding, "I felt that the CSP program would fit best with my overall goal." Penny grew up in the area and attended UMass Lowell for her undergraduate degree. Utilizing the combined Bachelor/Master's program, Penny not only started her graduate

classes this semester, but began her new job. There have been some interesting overlaps between the two for her. She says, "I am an Underage Drinking Prevention Grant Coordinator, and the state requires that we focus on prevention using an ecological model. I feel as though my courses open my mind and build on my understanding of my job."

Lyneth Torres, newly married, recently moved to Lowell from her home in Chicago to begin the CSP program. In her own words, she came to the program because, "I wanted to work out in the community and was looking at the possibility of pursuing a doctoral degree, CSP allows me to prepare for both." Previously, Lyneth has worked as a tutor for under resourced high schools in Chicago through a non-profit, and also as a research assistant working in elementary schools.

The diversity of CSP students is in large part what makes our program so rich, and a tradition of shared pride. The wide range of experiences and perspectives, such as those brought to the program by students like Johannes, Penny and Lyneth, enhances our learning experiences and our understanding of diversity and community. We are grateful for the continued diversity our new students bring to the program – Welcome, Class of 2010!



Front L-R: Sandra G. M., Christine D., Lyneth T., Nissa L., Julie B.
Back L-R: Sokny L., Alicia G., Michelle H., Brandon H., Michelle C., Debbie M., Mikaela B., Penny B.

Meet the New Officers of the Psychology Graduate Student Organization

L-R: Michelle Holmberg (Secretary), Lyneth Torres (Alternate Senator), Nataliya Poto (President), Matt Jones (Alternate Senator).
Not pictured: Barbara Warren (Vice President), Amy Stanley (Treasurer), Phooi Wah Khoo (Senator)



"For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: how do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?"
- bell hooks

"Working together, we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds... in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union."
Barack Obama

Heads up!! Graduate Student Association meetings will be held on South Campus for the Spring semester in Coburn 205.